

Edited Interview with Andy Whelan in Cathal Brugha Street (3/6/2003)

Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire (MM) Andy Whelan (AW)

1. **MM:** So tell us what year were you born.
2. **AW:** I was born in 1938 in Sandymount and I lived in Sandymount until I was twenty-eight years of age when I got married.
3. **MM:** What did you father do Andy?
4. **AW:** My father was a bread van driver. I was the youngest of eight children.
5. **MM:** Who did he work for, Johnston Mooneys was it?
6. **AW:** Kennedy's, Peter Kennedy's.
7. **MM:** Where were they?
8. **AW:** They were Parnell Street and they were in Ringsend, just behind the Greyhound Stadium now in Ringsend. They were a very big operation at the time, yeah. He had worked with them, ah, he was there during the Tans and all that sort of thing so they were a fairly big operation at the time. The other big ones were Bolands and Johnson Mooney's, they were the three main ones. Subsidiary of Kennedys was the DBC which...
9. **MM:** The Dublin Bakery Company.
10. **AW:** Yeah they looked after the cakes and the pastry end of things you know. So they were small, mainly it was just bread he sold. He had a particular round. He went around Donnybrook and all that area you know. So all of us in turn, all the boys would go out and give him a hand delivering the bread, that sort of thing you know.
11. **MM:** And when would he have started off with sort of a motorised van as such because I'm sure that only came around mid 20s or 30s?
12. **AW:** He started off with the horse and cart and then he went from that to the electric van, it must have been around the mid 50s I think, around the early 50s or mid 50s and the disadvantage of that was when you were delivering the bread was that with a horse the horse moved with you whereas with the van you were slower because you had to get back into the van to move it on you see.
13. **MM:** (Laugh) the horse was on auto pilot (laugh).
14. **AW:** The horse was on auto pilot you see so it was better in that respect. So yeah I lived in Sandymount up until I was married and I started off in the local school, the Star of the Sea and then I went from there to the Christian Brothers in Westland Row and I left after doing my Inter Cert and I started here in the college in 1954. And at that time it was a very small college. There was only twelve of us in first year chefs and twelve in second year chefs and I think there was a household management course and a hotel management course as well. Very, very small.
15. **MM:** Did you come straight from Westland Row to here?
16. **AW:** Yes I did yeah.

17. **MM:** And was there an exam to do to come in?
18. **AW:** There was an exam to do and it was very basic. It was more or less of the, em, what would they call it at the time, the primary certificate. So I'd gone on to second level, I left after enter. So I came in here, I did the exam and I got a place in here.
19. **MM:** Was it a scholarship you got?
20. **AW:** Yeah it was a scholarship at the time. Now, very small. Oh I can't remember the exact amount but it was a very, very small amount of money anyway. You did the two full years, you didn't go out. You had a break in the summer and came back in and did second year and em, say the place was much smaller. The cafeteria is down where the office is now and the restaurant was up on the third floor. That was a restaurant as such. Oh you know, the day before you were in the restaurant you did you meal in class and then you went into the restaurant the next day. And you had a system, they tried to run it on the *partie* system which wasn't too effective because the chef would take the order. He was the sous chef, he'd go around the different tables, put down the orders and then they'd do that and then they'd come in and pick it up and all that sort of thing. An antiquated kind of system. But they tried to base it on the *partie* system.
21. **MM:** And who was teaching there Andy at the time?
22. **AW:** Two guys, one fella was called Murphy, although he was French, the name Murphy, Beaucaire Murphy and the other guys name was Andler, a Swiss guy, they were two chefs. Murphy left after the first year, after my first year here and he was replaced by Michael Ganly and then PJ Dunne came in as the larder chef. The larder was just outside kitchen 17 because there was no extension. That was just the end of the college and then...
23. **MM:** And he'd come from Jammets.
24. **AW:** He came from Jammets.
25. **MM:** And where did Michael come from?
26. **AW:** Michael Gamley came from the Moira Hotel.
27. **MM:** The Moira Hotel.
28. **AW:** Yes, yeah that's where he came from. Now I never had him in class. I dealt with the Andler in the second year.
29. **MM:** The Moira was that Andrew Street?
30. **AW:** Trinity Street was it?
31. **MM:** Or Trinity Street that's right yeah. It's a car park now isn't it.
32. **AW:** Yeah, that's right. I think they were connected to Jurys somewhere.
33. **MM:** In College Green at the time wasn't it.
34. **AW:** The Moira was a subsidiary of them. I think there was some connection between them. But I'd never, I used to see Mick around but I never had any contact with him and then at the end of the second year we did an equivalent to what would be a City and Guilds exam and then we were placed out in industry. And I went over to the Gresham and I hated it. I didn't know how I was going to stick it because it was such a different culture altogether coming from here over to there which was totally unprepared for what you went into and again I was on the *partie* system

but there was huge amount of staff. To give you some idea, that I started off in the larder and in the larder there were five chefs and there were five *commis* and then you did your stint around. You did larder and then you went out to veg. Usually they'd start you on the vegetables but for some reason or other I started on the larder and then I went around the different corners. But a huge, huge staff you know. You'd often wonder was there too many staff at the time you know? But then when you break it down, like people on their days off, and all that sort of thing. Yeah it may have worked alright. At times there probably was but if you had the insight to say at the time, yes you could, you know you could streamline this sort of thing and you know make it easier. Perhaps we could have done but it was massive.

35. **MM:** Was Uhlemann the chef there at the time?
36. **AW:** Uhlemann was head chef and Michael McManus was the sous chef.
37. **MM:** And were they long, they mustn't have been too long in the Gresham by the time you arrived or were they?
38. **AW:** Oh they were. Uhlemann originally was German obviously and he was captured in the First World War and he was imprisoned in Oldcastle...
39. **MM:** In County Meath yeah.
40. **AW:** And my mother was from County Cavan but the nearest town for shopping was Oldcastle, and he got to know that so we struck up a kind of a relationship, because he knew a lot about Oldcastle and all that sort of thing so he was...
41. **MM:** But he never went home then.
42. **AW:** Never went home, never went home, no. He went from there and he got, he went to what was known as the Regal Rooms you know where the, Hawkin House. There was a restaurant there and the funny thing about it was that when they converted into a cinema they still left the old format of a restaurant because the balcony was around here so if you were lucky enough not to get a seat in the main cinema you went up to the balcony. You're viewing was restricted. Until that, like years later they knocked the whole thing and then they built a new cinema there but that was restaurant at the time and then he went from there. I think McManus joined him in the Regal Rooms and then he went from the Regal Rooms, he went to the Gresham and McManus came with him to the Gresham as well.
43. **MM:** It wasn't part of the Theatre Royal was it?
44. **AW:** No.
45. **MM:** It was two separate cinemas around Hawkins Street.
46. **AW:** That was one cinema and the other one was the Regal Rooms. I think they were both owned by Odeon or Rank but they were two different cinemas altogether. The Royal was a different thing. The Royal was show the film and a sing along, you know that sort of thing. Good value for money you know.
47. **MM:** And was Uhlemann like, he was a trained chef and then he happened to be in the German army?
48. **AW:** I think so. At the time I joined now he was getting a bit older, you know and he had this high chair that he used to sit, I believed he suffered; he had a rupture you know. And ah, so he had a high chair he used to sit on that and he'd direct all operations from this high chair. He'd sit there and there was total silence in the kitchen when he came in. Like he arrived in the morning time,

he used to arrive that little bit later so there was a little banter going on first while and then once he arrived total silence.

49. **MM:** Yeah.

50. **AW:** And (laugh) he just got on with it except for a few wags that would get it up for him you know like. Throwing dishes here and there and unfortunately, like he wasn't able to move so you'd wait for the shout and then it came but my God when he did shout you ran, you know. So he retired then after I don't know how many years after that but McManus took over and he was a hard task master too. He was some man to work for.

51. **MM:** Where was he from, was he a Dub was he?

52. **AW:** McManus was from, no, was he a Dub? I have some idea that he came from up around Meath somewhere. I thought that now, I thought that now, I'm too sure. He definitely wasn't from Dublin. Now I can't remember where he was from but he was a hard task master but he was very good. Like he enjoyed a terrible lot of slugging over the years, people saying, you know, this and that. But I always being a hard task master but at the same time he worked very, very hard and he expected you to work just as hard with him, you know. But he had this terrible habit of, he did a dish and then he'd show you how to do it and then you did it the next day and he'd say 'like where did you learn to do that' and you'd say 'you showed me chef', 'oh I never showed you that' because he kept hopping and I think I inherited this thing of compromising and improvising with food when you're when doing something. You do something different, you never do it the same so although you'd have a basic menu, a basic recipe there, you'd add your own little bit into it and I think that's where I got that from you know I'd say. Something different put it in there. And he could never remember, I should have written it down at the time. He didn't write it down but I think he was cute enough not to write it down simply because he would change it so often. But again as I say he got a lot of criticism but I thought he was brilliant like. Like the workload that he did in the day time and he had, his expertise was something like, like mostly sauces now. Mostly in the sauces but there was nothing that he couldn't turn his hand to. Like when they were doing, when they were starting off sugar work first of all, like he started to learn how to do sugar, they started to do baskets, all this sort of thing. Nobody else was doing it at the time and he was doing it at that time. I know we were making loads of mistakes obviously at the time but he kept at it, kept at it, you know. Like one of the things he would do would be when he was doing the sugar, like he'd boil up the sugar of course and like glucose and all that sort of thing and onto a marble slab and then he'd pick it up with the scoop and then he'd roll it and then he'd throw it to you and you have to pull before your hands started to burn and the next guy, he got the sheen on it.

53. **MM:** Yeah, yeah.

54. **AW:** And then he had this old pattern thing that he had, big nails with the tops off them and he started weaving the sugar in and out to make the baskets. But he did it. Like he was afraid of nothing! He was afraid of nothing and he'd go, rather than going off in the afternoon he'd go over to his office and he'd start reading and he'd read up ideas and come back with his ideas and try and introduce them again. You know we'd go along with that (laugh) but the same time he could be a devil on his day you know. Professionally he always had this idea that you wanted for parties, for functions, you always had to have plenty of food you know. Loads of food and ah, like we'd know ourselves there was too much there but you'd just have to have it and didn't want to run short and so most of functions were done up in the ballroom. The old kitchen was, the old Gresham kitchen was you went down a slope and it was underground and then years later then they had, no sorry, at that time, even at that time the ballroom was on the first floor and it had its own kitchen. Its own kind of, not so much a kitchen...

55. **MM:** A sort of a servery or something like that?

56. **AW:** Yeah, yeah and hot plates and all that sort of thing. A hot press and all that sort of thing but when the function would be on, you know, some of the staff had to go up to do that and the rest were left downstairs and you thought say you the restaurant to look after, you'd have the grill room to look after and all this sort of thing and then the request would come down for more vegetables. You might be up to your eyes and say 'ah'. It would probably be a young fella that would come 'the chef wants more peas'. 'Ah tell him feck off'. And unfortunately the young fella would go up and say (laugh).
57. **MM:** (Laugh).
58. **AW:** And you'd hear this running down the kitchen, you'd hear the run and scatter, scatter (laugh). And he'd just click his fingers, give it to me, give it to me and you'd have to get it somewhere. You went to all sorts. It was the best lesson you'd ever get for being able improvise, to get stuff in a hurry. To heat it, to give it up to them, you know. And then you'd see it all coming back and they'd say 'ah we didn't need it' but they didn't think that. You needed it then, you'd have to have there and that was it you know. But it was a good lesson, it was a good lesson, tremendous pressure, I mean. You know tremendous pressure you worked under the whole time and when I went there first I used to hate it. 'I'll kill him, I'll kill him' you know. Then you'd go off home every night dreaming how you'd kill the guy, you know. But then as you got to work with him then, you know, you knew his style and you knew what his standards were. He had very high standards, very, very high standards. If a dish wasn't right, it didn't go out and that was it. That was it, no way, that was left. Even streaks like, you know, there was a guy, we had a big old fashioned grill, charcoal grill and the orders were rolling in you know. But he always stood at the hotplate and he'd check it, check it and if it wasn't right you'd have to start all over again. So you knew, you had to get it right first time but a great learning curve, you know.
59. **MM:** How many restaurants were in the Gresham? Like there was a grill room wasn't there.
60. **AW:** You had a grill room, you had a restaurant and then you had private functions up on the first floor. You could have as many as, particularly for weddings around Easter time you'd have the small weddings. Now the big weddings in the ballroom, of course, The Aberdeen room and then the smaller ones were all held up the floor so you'd have the different function rooms up the floors for twenty, you know, all that sort of thing and Easter Monday was a big day because there were no weddings during Lent. So Easter Monday was the big day for weddings you know. You know you'd sell the menu, the different priced menus but they'd always be different somewhere along the road. They had a certain standard for certain one, like starter either a vol au vent mushrooms, something like that. Turkey and ham, you know, that type of thing. But when you got them all together it was very hard to keep track of them all as well as doing the grill room. The restaurant was easier because the restaurant mostly concentrated on *table d'hote* menus so they had their own little hot press up there, a little servery up there and you supplied that in the evening times. So that was easy enough you know. This was the big one, the grill room was the big one where you had to, this was the, you know the main one really and then when you had dances and that sort of thing you had to have so many people on, looking after that function as well. The old Aberdeen ballroom could hold up to as many as, I think I remember 650 people at one time. You know that looks like a number.
61. **MM:** And at a dinner dance that would they all be fed?
62. **AW:** Oh yeah. And in some cases you'd have breakfast on departure.
63. **MM:** On departure, yeah, yeah.
64. **AW:** And not only did you serve, you held back then and then you started cooking the breakfast. Breakfast on departure then. So it was a long night you know!
65. **MM:** But again it was all silver service wasn't it?

66. **AW:** Ah no, not really. It was after a while. Initially it was all plate service. It was plated and you'd put the rings on and put them in the hot press and heat it up that way but I believe before my time they used to have, they had to use the boiling water on them to heat them up that way you know. But in my time now...
67. **MM:** How did that operate?
68. **AW:** They just plated it up...Plated all up and then poured boiling water...In the heater oven, and hoped to God nobody got food poisoning (laugh). But at my time you carved it except it was steak or roast beef, then it was carved in the room. But mainly turkey and ham was all kind of, it was just plated and put on the ring, put on the plate, ringed and put in the oven and then when the service time would come like the soups were already downstairs and that was brought up at the last minute and then they served from that in big jugs and that sort of thing. And then soups were taken away and then the hot plates were all taken out and usually, I think vegetables were served separately. It would be served separately. So you'd just gravy on the plates and then you take them that way. Very, very, quick. Very, very, quick.
69. One very amusing story that, em, em, we used to have, sometimes you'd have consommé on the menu right. The idea was that you'd have the consommé in the big stock... Now the consommé was always made up in big, big stock pots so get all the mince, you get all the clarification and you put it in, you brought it up slowly up to the boil so that near service time then you just opened the taps at the end and into the muslin, the usual sort of thing, into the big pots and they were put on the range anyway and they were kept there and during the dance, the dancing, the band was Neil Kearns. That was his band at the time. So he was the signal for the soups that they were ready to serve, supper was they always play the *Pasa doble*.
70. **MM:** Right (laugh).
71. **AW:** So you knew then. Once you heard that it was time so anyway we had the consommés on the range and for some reason and I could never understand why but they always seemed to thicken the consommé slightly with arrowroot, just slightly. It was easier for pouring or something. But anyway the guy...
72. **MM:** Or it might hold the garnish or something there.
73. **AW:** I don't know what it was but the guy anyway he mixed it up and he put bread soda right. So the signal came for the *Pasa doble*. Soups away, alright, so you have to take the soups down off the range and he carried them up the steps, one behind and one in front. Carrying them this way. Soups away. The guy put the, as he thought the arrow root in, was bread soda. Soup started to bubble and bubble and bubble and somehow he managed to get word to Neil Kearns that you know 'give another go to the *Pasa doble*'. So he said 'well did you like that?' We'll do it one more time.
74. **MM:** (Laugh).
75. **AW:** He looked at use and not yet because in the meantime they were doing all sort of tricks trying to get the consommé back. He said 'we have a request from that gentleman down there', he wanted it again (laugh). He'd played the bloody thing four times at this stage (laugh). The sweat was pouring off the guys in the dance floor.
76. **MM:** (Laugh).
77. **AW:** When they were over the first course, nice hot consommé he loved it (laugh). Well that was fun. You know, there was no such thing as you'd look for volunteers at night time to do the dance you know but there was not such thing as, you never said no. 'Will you do the dance? Will

you do late duty?' 'No', 'What?' 'Oh yes, I mean yes, I mean yes'. There was no such thing as volunteering. If you didn't volunteer you were gone, that was it you know (laugh).

78. **MM:** If you sign me up I'll volunteer (laugh).

79. **AW:** And even like, the threat was always there funny enough in those day because jobs were scarce, this was the 50s now, it's a little bit different now. They'd say 'we'll run you out of here, and you won't get a job anywhere else in the city of Dublin', you know. You're saying 'oh God I have to do it' and that was it and then occasionally like if you'd say I'd no transport and one of the fellas had a bicycle and he'd lend you the bicycle to get you back. But more often or not you kind of walked home. They were long days, long days but you kind of got used to them after a while. No days off of course.

80. **MM:** And was it a six day week or a seven day week? Like how did it work?

81. **AW:** Well you had a day off. You had a day off and you had an early day but more often or not you didn't get it off.

82. **MM:** Oh right yeah (laugh).

83. **AW:** You know you said that 'you're in tomorrow'. You were told you were in tomorrow but 'it's my day off'. 'What' but if you came in on your day off you got off about 3 pm you know. Time off was very, if you wanted a day off you kind of booked it about a year in advance. (Laugh) if you got it you were lucky.

84. **MM:** How about holidays Andy, did you get holidays.

85. **AW:** Ah we got holidays. We got two weeks. Oh yeah you'd have them together but you had a draw for them. You wouldn't always get them when you wanted. You just got them when you could get them. Usually you find yourself going into October maybe for summer holidays that sort of thing. No holidays for showing, no holidays for Spring show. Nobody off. Anytime there was big functions on forget about it. You know that was it even if you had arrangements made you had to cancel them. But then gradually what came in then after a while we had this, em, rather than having this split shift, you know, which was a terrible drag. I never minded so much when I was young, when I was single but when you got married then and you found that on the split shift that you were finished at 3 pm and then you had to go back at 5.30 pm and you'd like to go home to see the kids and you were missing out. You missed out a lot that way. I remember even one Christmas day going to work early and by the time I got home my children were gone to bed so I missed the whole bloody lot you know.

86. **MM:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

87. **AW:** You'd say 'ah there must be something better than this', you know and gradually of course the college did come along after it. After that then they decided to go for a split shift. One on until 3 pm and then the other took over at 3 pm until the end and it worked out grand. That was grand you know and things were getting good and conditions were getting good and then...

88. **MM:** When did those improvements start?

89. **AW:** They started in the 60s, yeah, yeah. In the 60s they came in and things were getting very good at the time and then they started to go back again. They started to cut back on staff and all this sort of thing and there was change of management in the hotel and there was a terrible lot of uncertainty, you know. It got to a stage before I left that you were so low on stock, you know, it was a case we had to over and borrow stuff. If you got a big party in there was this arrangement you'd go over to Maurice O'Looney over in the Shelbourne, borrow sirloin and bring it back in a taxi and then it got to a stage like Maurice used to ask like who owns the bloody sirloin (laugh).

That sort of working on a shoestring, and the standards were going down all the time. They were going down. You know you could see it going down and a lot of things were happening at the same, there were more hotel opening up so the Gresham although it had. The Gresham had the name just for upper class people which was really wrong. The great thing about the Green Isle when he (PV.Doyle) opened it up, he marketed it to say this is the workers hotel and they went there. And you know the Gresham still had this aloofness about it that people just wouldn't go into it, you know. Like, it was wrong.



Fig. AW.1: (l-r) John Clancy, Joe Erraught, Gerry Connell, Andy Whelan, Jimmy Kilbride, Bill Ryan, Bill (Liam) Kavanagh, Tony Campbell at Andy's Retirement Party, Cathal Brugha Street

- 90. **MM:** Like when you started there, you started there in 1956 or something like that was it?
- 91. **AW:** 1956.
- 92. **MM:** So the clientele there were sort of fairly up market, not totally up market?
- 93. **AW:** Yes, yes they were.
- 94. **MM:** Like who would be coming there?
- 95. **AW:** Oh you'd all the big ones sort coming. You know you had all the stars like Elizabeth Taylor or President Eisenhower, Nixon stayed there. George Peppard I remember. Lester Piggott, all those guys stayed there you know.
- 96. **MM:** And how about the Irish? Who would be the Irish? Would there be a lot of Anglo Irish?
- 97. **AW:** Just after the war business was great because they used to come down from the North, down for a meal down here because there was rationing still up there that wasn't here. We could provide good meals down here and go back up but I wouldn't have identified all that many. Christy Sands would now know more the people that came in. Christy has a great memory but I'd just say 'oh yeah' and I'd forget. But Christy has like a photographic memory. So the big ones you would remember. Other people you just...

98. **MM:** But when did that change like, when did the change come, when going to a hotel because more democratised?
99. **AW:** I think the Green Isle was the start of that.
100. **MM:** Was it yeah?
101. **AW:** I think so yeah. I think they started catering for working class.
102. **MM:** The Green Isle was PV Doyle's first hotel.
103. **AW:** Yes. There was a big break away from that. It got the name, although they were expensive enough but for some reason it got marketed that it was that type of hotel and it took off from there.
104. **MM:** Yeah.
105. **AW:** Before that you wouldn't dream of like... Like the big treat for us was going into Bewleys, you know that type of thing. But very little eating out. Even ourselves we wouldn't bother eating out.
106. **MM:** Like when did you first eat out?
107. **AW:** I think I started when I started courting, I think I started brining my wife or my future wife out at that time to places like... Oh you'd be eating out, you know you'd eat out after say a night out on the town with a few pints but other than that you'd eat in the burger joints. That type of thing came in. The burger places were starting to come in. Not McDonalds now. Just burgers, there was a place around there in North Earl Street where the Kylmore used to be and that was kind of a little restaurant, a late night restaurant. And there was one down along the quays there.
108. **MM:** And were they run by, were they run by Irish people or were they run by foreigners or Italians?
109. **AW:** The Last Post, that was a famous one for the bowl of soup. The French onion soup. That was that one. The eating out as such, I suppose I started eating out around the 60s, around that time you know, but before that you wouldn't dream of eating out. I suppose the thing was that you were in it, in that environment all the time you know, being well fed, you were always well fed by the hotels. Like the best of things. The breakfast was set up every morning, everybody sat down for breakfast and at lunch you sat down or you went down for your lunch but the head chef at the time would always sit in the kitchen and have his lunch. He'd invite a few people to sit with him you know. And he insisted on having whatever was on the lunch, he insisted on having everything on the table, like a couple of entrees and a roast and then he got to taste them all. He'd let you know if it wasn't right you know. It was a good...
110. **MM:** Quality control as well yeah, yeah.
111. **AW:** It was a good way of doing it, you know, that he had control on it and then of course you came back in the evening time and you had another meal there, a snack before you started and then later on in the night you had dinner. So you were well fed you know. You had no desire to go out anywhere really, you know and then you had a drink ration as well what they used to call the sweat rash.
112. **MM:** The sweat rash yeah. And what was that? say two pints a day or something or was it a bottle of...

- 113.AW: Ah it was very little and it was at the discretion of the old head chef one time to distribute these. A few bottles of this but they got more generous after a while you know through bribery to the barman and all this sort of thing (laugh).
- 114.MM: When you were starting out like say in say '56 or around that time like I suppose there wasn't that many top restaurants or restaurants in Dublin
- 115.AW: Jammet's was the big one and the Hibernian was very upper class as well. The Russell Hotel in Stephens Green was a big one there. Em, the Shelbourne of course, the Gresham. More hotel orientated rather than restaurant orientated. Restaurants actually with the exception of Jammets, I can not think, oh there was another one in Grafton Street called Mitchell's, the wine people who had a little restaurant. And there were was one or two others there. I can't remember, but I remember doing a bit of work in it, it was Fullers restaurant on Grafton Street.
- 116.MM: On Grafton Street.
- 117.AW: Yeah that was half way up Grafton Street that was another one like that. There was the old Paradisio.
- 118.MM: That was Westmoreland Street.
- 119.AW: Westmoreland Street yeah. And the other big one then was Barry's up here.
- 120.MM: Oh Barry's Hotel.
- 121.AW: Apart from that, Clery's was another restaurant. And then you have the kind of the ordinary type of, ah, Woolworth's famous for their big sausages.
- 122.MM: Was Woolworth's the first self service restaurant was it?
- 123.AW: I think it was, I think it was, yeah. The guy that worked there actually he came to work in the Gresham afterwards, Eamon Williams and he, ya, I think that was the first big one. They always specialised in these large sausages you know.
- 124.MM: Bangers.
- 125.AW: He was a great worker too but some great workers that way came. They never stopped working actually.
- 126.MM: So when did restaurants sort of come on the scene as, like was it more the '70s then or the '60s?
- 127.AW: Yeah there was one guy opened up there on the top of the old building there in Dolier Street where the Harp restaurant was. That was a big one at the time.
- 128.MM: Yeah there was one on top of the, sort of looked out over the sea or something?
- 129.AW: Yeah, that's right, that was a big one alright at the time but let me see was there any big ones around. No you tended to go to a hotel, to a restaurant in a hotel. That one I particularly remember and the other ones of course were more or less, they were lower, not lower class but they tended to go for the normal type of steaks.
- 130.MM: Yeah they were more sort of cafés or such.
- 131.AW: Yes, yes, so I'd say early...

- 132.MM: There was a place there called, let me think, a steak house there near the Pro Cathedral, the Palace.
- 133.AW: Yes, the Palace.
- 134.MM: Now where would that have fitted? That was sort of a middle to upmarket steakhouse?
- 135.AW: The Palace was unique in that it was a restaurant here and then at the back of it was a snooker hall. You had to walk through the restaurant to go to the snooker hall. And they had this style, that you had the steaks were on display, people picked out the steaks. The chef cooked it in the room for you. Well I suppose it was good at the time. There was a lot of forward thinking in it, that kind of stuff came in later on. But we were there, we spent a lot of our time down there in the Palace.
- 136.MM: There's another one, just ah, another point was that a lot of the cinemas had restaurants. The Savoy had it. The Adelphi had it...The Carlton had one, they all had restaurants and the Metropole. The Metropole was unique, it had restaurants, it had snack bars, it had all sort of cinemas, a ballroom, you know a huge operation altogether.
- 137.MM: Where was the Metropole again?
- 138.AW: Where Penneys is.
- 139.MM: Where Penneys, it was BHS then?
- 140.AW: That's right. And around the corner then was another one called the Capital and they had a restaurant as well. They all had restaurants in them.
- 141.MM: That's down towards the GPO Arcade down there was it on Princes Street, right.
- 142.AW: Yeah and it was quite a normal thing that you would go maybe and have something to eat in the cinema first of all before you went into the cinema, you know.
- 143.MM: So what was the main thing, was it sort of a mixed grill or a steak or something like that.
- 144.AW: Omelettes, Plaice and steaks. There was no...
- 145.MM: Was the gammon with pineapple, did that come in then or was it later on.
- 146.AW: Oh I think that was much later on. I think it was all fairly straightforward. It was either roast chicken, a half roast chicken or steak or plaice and chips and everything was with chips. And what was the other big one then, yeah plaice, chicken, steak. They were the ones, pork chops. Yeah but em, yeah, that was it, that was the restaurants as such you know. I can't remember, I'm sure there are lots more, you know places change so much you kind of think there was a restaurant there or there was something there or, you know.
- 147.MM: Trying to keep track of them all, yeah. It's funny you were talking about McManus and you're talking about that he should have written things down but Uhlemann did write things down. He kept his, what is it, the chef's companion is it?
- 148.AW: Yes, yes, yes.
- 149.MM: And what sort of thing, I know you have a copy of that...
- 150.AW: It's not mine, it's actually Liam Kavanagh's before I go (pause).

- 151.MM: Ah that's it there. Yeah. Actually I'll take this and make a photocopy of it and I'll give...
- 152.AW: And afterwards I'll have to return it.
- 153.MM: And I'll do a copy for you.
- 154.AW: There's stuff in it there. It's like a time, it was his own interpretation.
- 155.MM: And that's himself is it?
- 156.AW: No, that's not him. That's some other guy, I don't know who. Apple bombe, apple charolette, these are the popular ones, (inaudible) we didn't do all of those. Escalope, these are the popular ones here. *Cordon blue* was popular, (inaudible), these ones here were all very popular and the schnitzel was very popular, *ala crème* was popular too. The *schnitzel*...
- 157.MM: The *wiener schnitzel*?
- 158.AW: They were the more popular ones there yeah. And the sole ones, the most popular ones would be the *bonne femme* and that sort of thing. He didn't cover, he wrote them all and when you read into them nowadays you say 'oh God that's not right'. He put his own interpretations. (Referring to the book) That was given to Liam. They're very rare and as I say I have to give it back to Liam now. He was Governor of the Order of Merit International and all that sort of thing. Culinary Master on ship.
- 159.MM: Yeah, yeah.
- 160.AW: And a very good artist too, a very good artist.
- 161.MM: Were you working there when Liam was working there?
- 162.AW: I was Liam's *commis*.
- 163.MM: You were Liam's *commis* were you, yeah. I'm trying to remember now, Liam came there, had he been to America by the time he came there or...
- 164.AW: He'd been on the ships.
- 165.MM: Oh he'd been on the ships, that's right.
- 166.AW: Himself and Billie Ryan were on the ships.
- 167.MM: But he hadn't gone to America yet. He went to America I think after the Gresham. How was Liam to work with?
- 168.AW: He was very good (laugh), he was very good. And Bill Ryan then was the, do you remember Billie?
- 169.MM: I do yeah.
- 170.AW: Billie was doing the chef across in the pastry house. The kitchen was designed to go straight from the larder and then the pastry house was over here and then you went down another passage way and just here then they used to have a big slab. We used to have the *hors d'oeuvres* up there and then you went to the main kitchen along here. Roast corner here, sauce corner over there, vegetable corner down there and down at the back were two little women and they did the potatoes all the day. They supplied the potatoes.

- 171.MM: Oh the turning spuds.
- 172.AW: Buttering potatoes, doing all sort of potatoes but they were absolutely marvellous in that, the two women, both their husbands in invalids and they used to do so many potatoes and then run home and get him his breakfast, come back...Come back, do more potatoes, run home, get him his dinner, come back. Jesus you'd wonder how they ever did it you know.
- 173.MM: Yeah, yeah.
- 174.AW: And then you'd never miss them until their day off or one was out sick or something but the amount of potatoes and they just sat down. The potatoes were delivered, they just put it into the machine, turned them. They used to use all the old milk churns for the dances and all. Filled them up, you know, and the bigger ones then were for the chips. Some young fella had to cut the chips by hand and then you had to pick out the good chips and throw the bad ones to the side. They were used up for soups I think. And on a Friday then the range was, four big windows, four this side, four that side and the racks on top and the top of that was full of chips for lunch and they all disappeared at lunchtime. So you can imagine the eating culture at the time and you'd have to do more then after that, no frozen chips.
- 175.MM: Would they have been blanched first?
- 176.AW: Oh yeah they were blanched first, blanched, put up there...Another big tray of plaice you know, Fridays, particularly Fridays. A big, big tray of plaice and all the crumbs, the crumbs had to be made. They had this idea too that it saved the bread and the porter's job, one of his jobs was to make the breadcrumbs. So he dried the bread, put it in an old mincer and he got the breadcrumbs that way. Crumbed them up, croquettes were all made by hand, all the time. But on a Friday, very little meat was sold it was all fishes. And then occasionally he'd decide to put on Irish stew and all the Irish stew was all individually put up on the range so you had four ranges full of little casseroles.
- 177.MM: Oh little casseroles yeah.
- 178.AW: And you were going round with the stock and topping these up every so often. (laugh) You had to start off with your meat, you know, cutting onions and the potatoes. The potatoes went in and he kept some of the potatoes back and he made a kind of puree with them and they just went on top but each one was individually served. And when he had that on he said 'oh Jesus this is ridiculous', that you had to have, you'd have a standby. Of course that was maybe a big pot...A big pot of it just in case. But it was all, the whole range was taken up with this and you'd get nothing on it. That was a disaster really you know (laugh).
- 179.MM: What fish was sold, like was it the old reliable or...
- 180.AW: Sole and plaice. I even remember him first of all coming in, brining in monk fish which was rather cheap at the time and they thought that it would be a good idea to try, if they got the monk fish, and you know the way you can breakdown between the fibres of the monk fish and sell them instead of prawns because prawns were working out too expensive.
- 181.MM: Yeah, yeah.
- 182.AW: They tried that. I remember experimenting with it. They, it was too much bother, they didn't bother in the end but that was looked on as a cheap type of fish. You know cod was cheap and smoked haddock, cheap. Now smoked haddock was used mostly for breakfast and you know and it was used occasionally for lunchtime.
- 183.MM: Would you have served kedgeree for breakfast or?

- 184.AW: Breakfast was very standard. It was bacon, egg, sausage, all the different types of eggs, that type of thing. Occasionally then you used to get this order in for brown hash, the Americans used to...But a big one at the time was the brown bread. You made your own brown bread and it was made on huge slab, baked off and it went down a treat with the Americans because they'd never come across it.
- 185.MM: And was it a soda bread or yeast bread?
- 186.AW: It was soda bread. Brown soda bread. So I used to get loads of requests for the recipe but like it was done in bulk so you could never try to break it down.
- 187.MM: Scale it down to get it...
- 188.AW: But it was a big one at the time the brown bread. The pastry area was the only place where we employed cooks. There were two cooks there and again kind of no proper layout because the pastry house was here and the ovens were kept down here so there was constant up and down the whole time you know. But like that, they worked away, they just kept supplying, supplying, supplying all the time and then they would leave, they would always leave a supply of cakes for the afternoon teas and all that sort of thing. There was, I know when I go on myself one of the things I used to say like 'just leave a sponge at night time' because you get loads of requests for birthday cakes. And once you have a sponge, you can just fill a sponge and write on it happy, whatever it was. They just worked away quietly all the time supplying the stuff. You know and you'd sell, the amount of afternoon teas, ah it was the hundreds at least.
- 189.MM: And who would have made the sandwiches?
- 190.AW: The sandwiches were made in the still room.
- 191.MM: And was that women again?
- 192.AW: All women there yeah. They just made the sandwiches yeah. The other big one was the orange juice for the breakfast; they all had to be squeezed, freshly squeezed oranges. So some poor young fella he'd have to squeeze three or four cases of oranges in the old fashioned way. You know cut them and squeeze them. And you'd see this yellow thing coming out (laugh), he looked like an orange and you'd fill it up now, put it by for the next morning. But it had to be fresh orange juice every morning and they'd tray up all the bacon of course and you know keep the fat from the grilled bacon for frying the eggs on.
193. But that changed after a while too where they had their own self service, like what's in operation nowadays in the hotels but traditionally you were always individually served. The breakfast chef came on at 6 am I think it was. The porter already had the porridge made and he would start off then preparing breakfast. Breakfast went on until 11 am, I think it was. And then the breakfast chef usually gave a hand, oh yeah the breakfast chef went up stairs to the side hall which was the service area for the restaurant and he did the lunch and that was his day. It was a long day too, 6 am to 3 pm. It was a long day but ah, breakfast was just traditional stuff. There was not kind, no kedgeriee as such, you know. You might get the occasional order for omelettes and that sort of thing. That really threw him around (laugh). He was only used to the traditional stuff basically eggs and that sort of thing you know.
- 194.MM: Were any of your brothers or sisters or whatever involved in catering?
- 195.AW: No, no.
- 196.MM: So it was just a pure chance that you went into it?

- 197.AW: Pure chance, just pure chance, and you know people say 'I'd love to, I've always wanted to be in', no I just saw this ad and I went for it and I just stuck with it then. I liked it after a while. I just got to like the part of cooking and all that sort of thing and got to like the feel of food really. That was the whole thing, got the feel of the food and that. Particularly the sauce area, I love the sauce area because you could experiment all the time. The other ones like the vegetable were monotonous. The larder was mostly butchery.
- 198.MM: Yeah, yeah.
- 199.AW: I loved the sauces, even up today now. I love experimenting with different sauces, just to experiment, experiment you know. Traditionally, traditional stuff, I still experiment.
- 200.MM: As you say, following Macker's tradition!
- 201.AW: Not quite, you never get the same dish twice and I'm a 'hoor' for the butter and all that sort of thing too, you know. Butter was everything, butter in everything and cream in everything too you know. Rich, rich food, yeah.
- 202.MM: When you started was it coal ovens in the Gresham, do you remember?
- 203.AW: No, no, no, they were gas ovens. The coal ovens were before my time. I can't remember them just the gas ovens. Just the traditional type of gas oven but great demarcation lines in the kitchen too. If the roast corner were very busy and they asked could they use the ovens on the sauce corner side, it was up to you to look after them. They'd never open the oven and say like 'this was ready', that was your baby. So real, in a way the *partie* system was, you know, it had its drawbacks in that way. There was too much demarcation in the sense that you just... They stayed within those limits and that was it.
- 204.MM: Yeah, yeah.
- 205.AW: Whereas when they started you know the breakdown and that sort of thing and they got into the rationalisation of the kitchen and that sort of thing there was more co-operation really. You know you've a bigger area to cover, you know that sort of thing but that was one of the disadvantages I found at the time that it was so rigid. They were so rigid in it. You know I remember even as a young commi like walking from, I think I was on the veg at the time, coming from there up to hot plate and I walked in front of a table and the fella bawled me out of it for walking in front. I should have walked behind. Ridiculous you know. They were all very protective of their space.
- 206.MM: But how about their knowledge as well, like were they protective of what they knew? Like as a young *commis* would people bring you aside and say here look at what I'm doing here?
- 207.AW: Some would. The likes of Liam (Kavanagh) would. He would always show you things. Others, no, they were a bit protective, you know, of the knowledge that they had and others seemed to have, other would seem to work away. They worked better on their own without having a *commis* with them. They seemed to; you were a distraction to them. They seemed to work and they'd have a deadline. There was one guy on the sauces and actually he was a sauce cook at the time and like he was, sauce were also responsible for the soups as well. The soups and the sauces but he had a deadline and he had to finish every day at 12 noon and he worked like a black until 12 and he had everything ready and lunch started at 12.30 pm. That was his deadline but if you asked anything you were a distraction to him. He'd say 'go over and chop parsley of something but keep out of my way'. You see he had his own system so in that way you know they weren't very forthcoming with their information. Ah you'd pick up things of course, you know. Maybe some you'd pick up the hard way, like you know. How do you know that's cooked? how do you know? and if you had to ask. You were given certain tasks and it was more like a corrective thing, like if you did it wrong. Now do it again. This is a learning process. There

wasn't much information coming as to why you did it wrong. But having said that, there was a lot of knowledge going around I suppose and you would pick up things if you tried.

208.MM: How many was working in there? You said there's about five in each section so would there have been thirty/thirty-five.

209.AW: Well I had an old photograph. I was doing a book by Christy Sands, the old staff and I think I remember counting something in the region of forty something. You see the system at the time was that in those days you had to do seven years apprenticeship or training or whatever it was and on your sixth year you became known as an improver.

210.MM: Right.

211.AW: So you had a certain amount of improvers and then you had the *chefs de partie*, chefs really should have been called cooks, improvers and then *commis*. But once you got to an improver you started looking around unless they offered you a job. More or often they let you go at that stage. You were ready for...

212.MM: You were one of the lucky ones.

213.AW: Or unlucky.

214.MM: Whatever way you'd look at it yeah.

215.AW: People often say like why did you stay there so long but it was a kind of culture and you kind of grow with it you know and I liked it and at the time I was moving up along the ladder too, you know that sort of thing. You felt more secure at it and the options at the time weren't all that good outside so you know I stayed there and I felt comfortable there.

216.MM: Trade unionism, was that strong in the Gresham?

217.AW: Very strong.

218.MM: Because I know that originally people got their jobs through the union and if you wanted a new place you'd go down to the union office, you'd have a look at what was available and that sort of stuff.

219.AW: But that was a type of thing now, that was more for casual work.

220.MM: Right, okay.

221.AW: But it was very strong, it was very strong and I think only for trade unionism at the time I think it would have been, I don't know what kind of conditions we would have been working under. We'd a very strong trade union leader at the time called Michael Mullen and he was a very, very, like he wasn't afraid to have a go at the bosses. He was very strong, a strong minded trade unionist and if something was wrong, he'd... We had the usual system the shop stewards and all that sort of thing but it was a strong trade union emphasis. Even the head chef was in the union so it worked really, really well. Most, I think all the staff were in the trade union, were trade union members. The only ones that wouldn't be in the trade union at the time were the receptionist upstairs you know and eventually they did because (inaudible) were coming. But at least you were secure in the fact that you were a member of a union and that. You know it had its draw backs, you'd strikes and things like that. You'd have to go out, you didn't have to go out but you felt it was your duty to go out with them.

222.MM: Were there many strikes?

- 223.AW: In my time I think I had two. I think was two, yeah there was two strikes. One which didn't really involve us so much it was some of the maintenance staff but we felt obliged at the time. We couldn't pass the picket so we were out on strike and hard old going too trying to survive because...
- 224.MM: When was that?
- 225.AW: I think it must have been, I know I only had one child at time. She wasn't very old, she was only about a year old so it must have been in the '60s. Yeah '60s I think it was. And then there was another one after that, it wasn't as long and I think it was in the '70s. The first was, when I say long, two weeks or something like that.
- 226.MM: And you were starting to feel the pinch?
- 227.AW: You were yeah, yeah (laugh) and you had more responsibilities at the time too. If you were single you wouldn't give a sugar but at that time you had it. The usual things you're after getting your house, you had the mortgage and all this sort of thing. There was a lot of pressure on you at the time. But, that was the thing, you stood by the people and that was the right thing to do at the time. There's not questions asked. I've been in a union since I was sixteen. I was a member of the ITGWU, what do they call it now the...
- 228.MM: SIPTU yeah.
- 229.AW: And then I joined the TUI down in the college, you know.
- 230.MM: The second strike in the '70s was that to do with the restaurant or the catering?
- 231.AW: It was something to do with the restaurant or something to do with the change in management. I can't exactly remember what it was but it wasn't a very long one. It was a short one.
- 232.MM: Sorted out quick enough.
- 233.AW: Yeah it was sorted out quick enough.
- 234.MM: The women really only worked in, they did damn hard work but they were in certain sections as such?
- 235.AW: Yes, yes. Two old women on the potatoes, two young cooks in the pastry section and the rest were all like washing up and all that but the staff, the kitchen staff were all chefs.
- 236.MM: When did that change?
- 237.AW: It changed I think when Noel Cullen took over. I think he introduced the first, he said he introduced the first chef at the time. She was a young *commis*.
- 238.MM: You don't remember who she was do you?
- 239.AW: I can't remember her name, no. I know there was a lot of publicity about it but there was nothing said about the two women. Probably they might have been considered cooks whereas this girl was considered a chef at that time.
- 240.MM: Yeah.
- 241.AW: You always had cooks like even in the college here you always had cooks. You had three classfulls of cooks and they stayed up in Mountjoy Square, there was a convent up there where they had there lodgings. There was always segregation there. There was always cooks and chefs

and then I can't remember when they amalgamated the two into one. I think I was here (College of Catering) at the time. Yes I was here. I had taken over a teaching position at the time when they decided to... First of all they decided to all have the one uniform and I think it was there then they had...

242.MM: When did you start here part-time? Like you started part-time first didn't you.

243.AW: Yeah, '75, 1975. One day per week and...

244.MM: And who asked you to come in or how did that come about?

245.AW: I think the request came across from either Bob (Lawlor) or Joe Hegarty and they were looking for somebody to fill in and nobody seemed to be interested so I came across and they said okay. Joe said 'okay I'll give you chance' and I took it and then I stayed with it until 1978 I got a full-time appointment.

246.MM: Right, yeah, yeah. And was the place expanding or had someone left?

247.AW: Who had left at the time? Let's see now, no it was expanding. We hadn't replaced anyone. Three of us started together, Jim Bowe. Sorry four of us started together Jim Bowe, Joe Erraught. Joe was already the larder chef here but he got a full-time position here, what were called in those days, a class three teacher. Anne Tracey was the other one. Jim Bowe, myself, Anne Tracey and Joe Erraught were all appointed at the one time and we were appointed as class threes and we were class threes for a while and then everything started to happen. You know they introduced new grades. There was, the old grade was a class three and assistant lecturer I think it was. Is that right, yes. And then they did away with that and they had lecturer/college teacher. So we went from class three to college teacher and then after so many years we were entitled to go for lecturer. I think that could have been one of the agreements. One of these 479 or 584, something like that. Anyway we were all upgraded to lecturer and I think they're trying to change that back again. All the ads now, all the ads in the paper are all assistant lecturer.

248.MM: Yeah. Who do you think the main catalysts for change in the restaurant industry over the last fifty, thirty, twenty years what ever? As in clearly the big changes happen around the '70s. '60s. When did tourism kick off?

249.AW: Well we had it to a small degree. We always had tourism to a small degree. As I said to you early on coming down from the North and whether they were classified as tourists as such I don't know but the tourist, the Americans started coming in the '60s I think it was. I think it was steadily growing but you always had an English, the English tours were always here anyway and I think they all, I always got the impression they wanted to talk more about the American tourist than the English tourists although the English tourists would spend more. I don't know what it was maybe because they were so close, resentment there you know.

250.MM: Familiarity breeding contempt or something?

251.AW: They were better spenders. The Americans were not good spenders and then gradually the continentals started coming in. The word started spreading! When it started to take off really I can't really say but you always, as far I know we'd always have tours coming in. It was a standardised thing. The tour was always brought in early, limited choice of food. Get them out as fast as you can. Typical tourist type of thing.

252.MM: It was a real sort, it was using up space before the main people came in.

253.AW: Yeah there was good revenue. It was revenue that you normally wouldn't get in anyway and you room was empty so why not fill the room and get rid of them. I used to be concentrating on the main business of the evening time. It was a good...

- 254.MM: You felt that the quality of the Gresham went down, it was at it's peak like...
- 255.AW: '60s.
- 256.MM: When you started coming up to the '60s like, it was at it's peak. It was the place but then...
- 257.AW: I thought it was...
- 258.MM: Was it hotels in general sort of started to make way towards restaurants?
- 259.AW: Well there was a few things. There were a few factors. I think one of the things was that where the new hotels were coming in the likes of the International one which is now Jury's...
- 260.MM: The Intercon.
- 261.AW: The Intercon. They had facilities like people could drive to the hotel and walk in you know. The Gresham hadn't got that, they'd no parking facilities, that type of thing started to hit people. You know the facilities weren't there. They at the time were slow to change. Now Eoin Dillon, he was a great one for bringing the change but unfortunately I think Eoin would have been brilliant there had he been left to do the job but he still had the old boss kind of breathing down his neck.
- 262.MM: Was that O'Sullivan, was it?
- 263.AW: O'Sullivan was more or less in the background. Dillon had brilliant ideas, absolutely brilliant ideas but he just wasn't given the opportunity. I think had he been left at the time I think the Gresham would have been the major player in the field at that stage because he proved that when he went over to the Tara in London. Introducing the computerised booking system and all that sort of thing and year after year getting the hotelier of the year type of thing, you know. He had a brilliant mind and you could see the minute he took over he had his, he started to even change the idea, change the outlook. We were slow to, like being entrenched in a certain way and having gone through the system and then this man coming in and telling us you know. Gradually he bought us around and gradually there was confidence started building up in him because we could see where he was going and then he just left all of a sudden. It was a pity because what came in after him then they hadn't got the calibre. I think when it was sold then it was sold to a fella called Tunney and we always got the impression that he was a speculator, that it was just another asset that he was going to keep. The hotel wasn't so much, he wasn't hotel background he was...
- 264.MM: A businessman or...
- 265.AW: Yeah a businessman as such. It started to slide a bit at that stage you know. It never got back then. I don't think it ever go back after that no. Maybe that's a biased opinion but I felt myself once the slide started coming its very hard and you know changing the structure of the building and all this sort of thing. That type of thing and it's very hard to get them back again once you loose them.

Discussion on origin of the Gresham

- 266.AW: It wasn't that big really. Like it was only after years that this part here went over, you know.
- 267.MM: The extension.

- 268.AW: It wasn't all that big. It had a name. You'd always say was it the wrong type of marketing that they were doing. They were marketing (inaudible) and it was unfortunate. Oh people would 'oh Jesus where do you think you are in the Gresham', you know that sort of thing.
- 269.MM: (Laugh). What's his name McManus took over from Uhlemann then as head chef. That was around what, the '60s?
- 270.AW: The '60s yes, yes.
- 271.MM: And who took over from McManus.
- 272.AW: A chap called Barney Nealan. Barney Nealan took over from him.
- 273.MM: And when did he take over?
- 274.AW: At that time what happened actually was that McManus was there and they started to introduce redundancies so Bernie said he would go for it and I think McManus got in there ahead of him for the redundancy so Bernie took over.
- 275.MM: So he had a good age on him Barney Nealan?
- 276.AW: Oh he had...
- 277.MM: Was he acting as *sous chef*?
- 278.AW: He was *sous chef*. A brilliant carver, and I never saw anybody as good as him at carving. He'd shave the turkey, he'd get so many portions out of it and always, he was always immaculate in his dress. He was one, he'd really stick out now in a kitchen. He always wore a very, very tall hat and his uniforms were immaculate no matter what type of work he was doing. And he had certain standards too and he liked certain ritual. When he finished work at night time he went down for his pint and he always drank the first one down to there and then he'd order a second one. And that was it. No matter who else came in that was it and he'd get his bus and go home but a great man for the figures too. Great man for working out the profits, he costing his menus. He had them down to a T. A brilliant mind that way. He left, went, got an offer to go to Clery's. Went to Clery's and went into partnership with Halpin, a fella called Stephen Halpin in Clery's and then they opened another restaurant down in the Ilac Centre called Hallins I think it was called. Do you know that one?
- 279.MM: I've heard of it yeah, yeah. I remember it vaguely.
- 280.AW: So he went on. He said the best thing he ever did was get out. So ah, a very likeable type, a different type of a class altogether from...He was a likeable type. Whether you like him or not but I suppose that's wrong to say in a head chef, but a gentleman.
- 281.MM: Yeah he was highly respected as such.
- 282.AW: Very highly respected, and you'd anything for Barney like you know. Great approach about it. You know I often think myself that he'd a great influence on me too in that kind of way. There was never any shouting as such and he got the work done. He kept control all the time but the work was done. Everybody like him. He respected everybody and you know it was an easy ship to work in at that stage, in that respect, that he got through the work but there was no real...
- 283.MM: Agro.
- 284.AW: Agro as such yes. Yeah he was great, a man before his time really you know.

- 285.MM: You mentioned costings there and that type of stuff. Did GPs or all this sort of stuff, was you know, did they play a big factor in it or did the chef control it?
- 286.AW: He did yeah, he did yeah, yeah. Again McManus was brilliant at that too. I remember on particular year that the profits were so high that he could afford to buy all the turkeys for the Christmas season, this was only in the start of the year for the following Christmas because the profits, you had to use up the money, you know.
- 287.MM: Yeah, yeah.
- 288.AW: But profit, they were always, you know you'd always have the same scare tactics during Lent. Business was down, people weren't eating, so he'd give you time off. I often remember he'd say 'the boss is coming down to hide some of those *commis* down the pot house'. You know (laugh). So he'd looking on to see how many staff you had and it was always kind of a bit, always the case, he'd always come down the wrong time when they'd be a lull in the business. A lot of people in his kitchen. But yeah, brilliant mind as regards to the costing. Costing everything. He was good. I always thought Barney had the edge on him but Barney would know immediately how much it was costing him and they had it down to a fine art and I think he had a better head for figures. McManus would be, what'll I say, he'd have the kind of the cute element about him that he'd know while I think Nealan had the edge that he was more into the figures man. He'd have it down like you know. He could give you precise details on where you were losing out, what to buy in, what sort of thing. So he was a great loss when he went. He was a great loss, we'd all great respect for him you know.
- 289.MM: Who took over from Barney then?
- 290.AW: Em well we ran it on a kind of a adhoc basis for a while, between Charlie Lyons and myself. And I knew this was coming up, this place was coming up so Noel Cullen then took over from him.
- 291.MM: Was he in the Gresham at the time or was he somewhere else?
- 292.AW: No he came from somewhere else. I think Charlie went off because Charlie Lyons didn't want it either and he invited him in as far as I know and then I think I only had about ah, maybe a couple of months there when no one was there. A very short time.
- 293.MM: Noel would have come in fairly young wouldn't he?
- 294.AW: He would, he would yes. He came in. He was young. I can't remember what age was but I hadn't got a lot, I think it was. If it was about nine months there with him I was, because I know the interviews for here, came up in February or March, I think it was February and I know they didn't make the appointments, well they made the appointments but you didn't take up your position until September.
- 295.MM: Yeah, yeah, the usual.
- 296.AW: So you were there but you were just kind of...
- 297.MM: Marking time yeah, yeah, yeah.
- 298.AW: Marking time, that was it you know.
- 299.MM: Very good. Why do you think, you know the way there's sort of huge turnover in people leaving the business now, you know, was there always that turnover in people, yeah?

300.AW: There wasn't at that time because you'd nothing else to go to. There was, you'd think of all the people that left in my time but they went to other positions. The guys that I know went to American, a lot of them went to the airport which was the big job at the time because of all the perks that were going with it.

301.MM: Oh because you could maybe get flights and stuff like that yeah.

302.AW: So there was a turnover at the time.

Discussion on when Dublin Airport started operating

303.MM: Oh Jimmy Flahive, yeah, Was he the first television chef?

304.AW: It was a skills thing. How you'd chop an onion.

305.MM: So he was out in the airport?

306.AW: Who was he followed by, Monica lick the finger. What was her name? (**note:** Monica Sheridan also known as finger licking Monica became a television personality)

307.MM: I wouldn't know her now but.

308.AW: I can't remember.

309.MM: Then there was another fella. Wasn't there another fella who worked for CIE at one stage who used to do.

310.AW: Nicky O'Neill. Did you know him?

311.MM: No I didn't know him but when I took over they'd be talking about him alright but I didn't know him, no.

312.AW: He came on then. He was more radio I think.

313.MM: Ah he was more radio, was he, yeah, yeah.

314.AW: No Flahive was the first.

315.MM: He used do a programme I think from Bus Aras. Maybe it was a radio programme from Bus Aras or something like that, yeah, yeah.

316.AW: Actually my first recollection of, you know, the Chef Ireland thing. They used to hold it in Busáras at that time and I entered a *croquembouche* at the time but it didn't get anywhere.

317.MM: Were you involved in the panel Andy?

318.AW: Ah I joined the panel. I didn't join the panel until later on.

319.MM: Were you here when you joined?

320.AW: No I was in the Gresham. I was just about leaving the Gresham, '76 or something like that when I joined the panel.

321.MM: And like who, like Frankie Farren was big in it at the time?

322.AW: Davy Edwards was the one at the time. Who was it, I can't remember. I was never all that much involved in it. I think I was secretary one time, secretary to the Leinster branch. That's

as much as I went into it, you know. Em, I'm still a member, you know, it's easier to be a member than not to be a member. Oh Flahive that brings back memories and ah...

323.MM: Was he Irish that fella?

324.AW: He was, he was yeah, he was yes, yeah. I'm just thinking, the class that was with me here in the college one of them went over to the Hibernian and became head chef, Nicky Closkey and David Edwards was in my class too.

325.MM: Right, Davy Edwards yeah.

326.AW: And Oscar Gantley, do you know Fergus's brother. He was in my class.

327.MM: Wow and is he still cheffing? Oscar?

328.AW: Oscar is living in Galway. He's in the RTC. And who else. I can't remember. They were the big ones, they were the ones I can remember. There was only twelve of us.

329.MM: Now were some of them, most of them came in scholarships. Were there some paying people as well?

330.AW: There could have been one or two. I think we were all on scholarships. I think we were all on scholarships. Go down and get your two and six or whatever it was (laugh). If you broke a bowl it was stopped (laugh).

331.MM: It was stopped out of your wages yeah (laugh).

332.AW: You might end up owing them money really like than you giving you money you know. Everything was kind of very rigid. Ah it was a different set-up altogether. You know when you think back now to what you were doing and like we had Andréas Ó Muineacháin as our teacher. And his idea of teaching Irish was to teach it in song fashion you know. So he had us all singing songs, down where Michael's (Mulvey) office is now. And he'd a few books along the wall in cases. That was the library as such. But he more or less, he was more or less in charge of the chefs and that sort of thing you know. Nice old lad.

333.MM: And was the kitchen taught through Irish as well or was it...

334.AW: No. In my first year we had this guy called Murphy and like you know (laugh) he was very good but he didn't seem to be getting in, he didn't seem to fit in well. You wouldn't understand at the time because you were just a student but he didn't seem to get on well women here you know. Mostly all women but very simple type of things you'd be doing. You know just doing soups or stuff like that and then you had to present it and he'd go down, he'd always make some comment. Like he'd taste the soups like that, it's piss (laugh)...

335.MM: He was French you said, even with the Murphy surname. And you don't know where he came from or where he had been working or anything, no?

336.AW: Beaucaire Murphy but you know the usual thing like. Fond of the old dogs, or the horses and he'd call you over, put that on the horse. But a very simple type. You know it wouldn't be the intense type class that you'd have nowadays. You did one or two items in a class.

337.MM: That was it.

338.AW: That was it, that was it, yeah. And you had that a couple of times a week and we used to do butchery then with PJ you know and that was harmless too when you think about it. Making a dem (demi-glace) one day or you were just shelling fish or something. You know it was harmless

type of stuff when we were sort of. Like I'd always remember PJ afterwards he'd say to see that guy 'I thought him everything he knows' (laugh). God you did alright yeah (laugh).

339.MM: Talking about that like who do you think people who came through the college while you were here who have gone on to do well in Ireland or abroad, like who would impress you at the moment.

340.AW: Beside yourself Máirtín (laugh).

341.MM: Beside myself (laugh).

342.AW: Em, Ciarán O'Catháin was one. Now I didn't teach Ciarán but he was here when I was here when I was teaching. He's Head of the Athlone Institute now. Worked the system, very clever, did the chefs course, did the H&C course went onto do a degree course and right through the system and got to where he is. Got a job down in, somewhere in the North and then he eventually ended in Athlone. Em, anybody else that went through the college that I can think of. There were some good one. Martin Callan was another good one. Do you remember Martin Callan, no, he worked in Switzerland for a few years? I don't know where he is now. There was one year here I had a class and I think they had to be unique, they were all so, it was a brilliant class to teach you know. And you know when you're just coming up at the time you're kind of harder on them I suppose at that stage and but every one of them went on to do something. There was one guy, his name slips my mind but at the time you used to have to interview for the course, for the chefs course here and he was a bank, he worked in a bank and Jim Bowe and myself were interviewing. I said you must be, you know, you're having us on. No says he I want to get out of the bank and he came on and he went. He went on and he became a head chef somewhere and you know really progressed. Really liked it you know. But people that went through the college here I don't, can I think of any big names. Names, I'm hopeless on names, I can remember faces alright.

343.MM: I remember you were saying Michael Martin was a student here at one stage.

344.AW: Michael Martin he was a student here yeah. Em, James Carberry. And his sister was student here as well. People that you'd meet afterwards. I'm hopeless on names, I just can't remember their names. No they went through it alright you know. You tend to put so many students through your hands you just can't remember. I find it very hard to remember them all.

345.MM: The silver service, we were talking about this briefly. When did plate service sort of take over as the main thing do you know? Like you were saying they did plate service in the Gresham alright for certain functions and stuff like that.

346.AW: I think plate service came about em, I can't remember when it came in. But you could see from out point of view putting up things on silver service and occasionally would be called away to their phone and the order was brought back in again after they were plated. They didn't seem to have, I don't know whether they had a skill or not or they just but it never looked the same. It was only after, I think we started introducing plate service then maybe late '70s or early '70s because of that sort of thing. You could see that all your efforts going out...The customer should see exactly as you put it out. What left you is what they got, you know, whereas the other way, God knows. Especially dishes with sauces on them, because older guys especially, there were a lot of old guys there so they didn't, you know, nothing...they just plonked it on. It's the same like with bar staff serving meals in a pub, the way they just plonk it on you know. They could do with a course there on presentation. It's all important to me anyway how you present it, how it presents on the plate. Not this heap of stuff. Not quantity. You know that it looks well so you can eat right away. Silver service I don't think any, you know I wouldn't think there's anybody, I don't think there's anywhere doing silver service now. If there is it's very rare.

347.MM: Yeah.

- 348.AW: And it's so slow too isn't it. You have to bring in and out and presenting it and putting it on the lamp, putting it on the plate, you know all that sort of...
- 349.MM: When you started out, the menu would nearly be the same in every restaurant or every hotel, would it be?
- 350.AW: Ah no, no, no, no, it was always different. You always had a layout. You always had a... *Table d'hôte* menus tended to stick to the same format. One or two starters, two soups, one fish and entrée and a joint, two or three sweets. One cold, one hot, that type of thing. *A la carte* changed a bit you know. *A la carte* they would change a bit depending on the popularity of a dish. There was always great demand for veal dishes, always a great demand for steak dishes. Always a great demand for the fish, steak and veal. They were the big sellers at the time but gradually they were changing them around you know. There was one particular one in the Gresham now, there was a great seller but then as the culture changed, this one was called a veal, it was called an *escalope à la maison*. And it was a veal dish which was crumbed and the tomatoes were marinated beforehand. Tomatoes were put on top after being marinated in a drop of cream, shallots, they're put on top of the veal and there was some type of a garnish like a tomato and fresh spinach with a small bit of nutmeg in the spinach and then the marinade was reduced down and it was thickened with either an egg yolk, yeah I think it was, coated over the veal glazed and there was cheese on top of it. Now that was a great seller but you know people's eating habits changed and they went back to the more plainer type of food again, you know. Other ones then, other ones were, oh the sole dishes were always very popular. The sole ones like the *bonne femme* and *veronique* they were always great sellers. All of the steaks of course from porter house steaks down to the minute steak.
- 351.MM: You had point steak as well I know...
- 352.AW: Point steaks, we always bought in the whole...
- 353.MM: The whole steak piece as such.
- 354.AW: The whole steak piece and then you got your *chateaubriand* from that, your points, and you got your rump steaks from that. Great sellers.
- 355.MM: Your t-bones, your porter house.
- 356.AW: T-bones, porter houses, yeah, yeah.
- 357.MM: Did you do carpetbags?
- 358.AW: Yes carpetbags.
- 359.MM: And you'd fill them with oyster?
- 360.AW: The carpetbag was filled with oysters yeah and I think they sautéed it, I don't think they grilled it. They just sautéed it and then they'd always make sauce some sort of an oyster sauce to go with it you know. Big seller too, big seller. Plank steaks.
- 361.MM: What was the plank steak?
- 362.AW: It was actually, it was served on a plank. I can't remember now did they cook it, couldn't cook it on the plank. Wait till I see. No I forget that one. Another big one was *spinach en branche* thing. Spinach which was cooked, pressed and cut into diamond shapes and served up that way. A lot of work. That even on the dances years ago they all insisted in bringing fresh vegetables, so you'd have fresh celery, trolleys full of fresh celery.

363.MM: Oh was that served in a sort of *béchamel* or something?

364.AW: Ah mostly a demi glaze.

365.MM: Yeah sort of like a braised that sort of thing.

366.AW: There was always stock pots going. You always had your *estoufade* (brown stock) and developed into a demi glaze. All of the meat places were on there too. What's the fish with meat glaze on it?

Discussion about fish garnishes

367.MM: And the deep fat fryers. When did ye get your modern deep fat fryers as such.

368.AW: They were always there. There was a deep fat fryer, well the old fashioned were the big things up on the The vats. Up on the range. Very dangerous. There was one went on fire at one time. The place was destroyed, no sorry that's wrong. It was a guy lifting a roasting tray full of meat up on to the range and it splashed and it went in on the range but a flame shot up, caught the fan overhead and the fire just ignited right around the fan and oh it was so dangerous. Like I was so frightened you know. Just run, run and then eventually when we were left back in again the place was just destroyed. The fireman came. They're job was to put out the fire.

369.MM: Tell me were you there for the famous goat episode?

370.AW: I was, I was.

371.MM: Tell me about it.

372.AW: Again it was McManus. He had this idea, he had seen this display. It was done for I think King Feisel or somebody like that. And it was a lamb, carcass of lamb which had been cooked on a spit and displayed as such and he got this idea that he would do it with a goat and he was looking for a goat for a while and the potato man eventually got him a goat. We were all working and we saw this thing going up along the kitchen and you could here the goat, baa, (laugh). So he was brought up and who was going to kill the goat? You know. So it was given to this guy. The job was given to this guy to go in and kill the goat. There was a peculiar layout of the kitchen because just below the kitchen here, on this side here there was a boiler house, so the goat was brought in there. And the guy was to do it, anyway, he didn't do a very good job on it. The poor old thing was screaming you know. I think he eventually choked it to death, you know. So they got, they went through the skins and all that sort of stuff and one of the lads for a bit of skit he got his girlfriend to type out this letter. It was supposed to be from the Department of Health saying that we have learnt that you, we have heard that you have slaughtered an animal in your kitchen which is contrary to this law (laugh).

373.And you couldn't look. He threw it all over the place. He oh no, not all but in the meantime the boss had heard about it and he contacted Mickey Mullen in the Union. Do you know what he's after doing now? He's after killing a goat (laugh).

374.So the story went around all over the place. They had to destroy it, cut it up into small little sections and (inaudible). It was a good idea I suppose you know but it was a bit silly, it was a bit silly really.

375.MM: It hadn't been thought out (laugh).

376.AW: It was something that hadn't been thought out. Just goes to show you, you know. It was a good idea at the time.

377.MM: So Gerry's Connell's brother was there at that time wasn't he. Is it Johnny, or is it Jimmy Connell.

378.AW: No he didn't stay very long with us. He was I think he was there at the time year. There was great commotion but it was a kind of a sickening. Do you ever hear an animal that's in agony. It was a real kind of a sick, the majority of use, but this big farmer guy, he choked it to death. They hadn't even thought out how they were going to slaughter it or anything like that. Everyone was reluctant to do it but then this one guy then reluctantly agreed to do it but did a very bad job on it. It left kind of a bad taste and a bad...

379.MM: And a bad memory.

380.AW: A bad memory yeah. Like you'd hate to be cruel to any animal but you know it was bad idea. He covered up by getting rid of the evidence (laugh).

381.MM: Very good.

382.AW: Is there anything else I can help you with?

383.MM: No I think that's covered nearly everything. PV Doyle I think, I was looking at sort of main catalysts for change and I think like you know it was PV Doyle opened up the Green Isle and then he had a big role then in democratising sort of hotels for the normal. Dress dances as well I think had a thing there did they because every one had to dress up or something.

384.AW: There again it shows you the forward thinking. The Aberdeen Room, the Aberdeen Hall was a beautiful hall altogether and it could hold up to approximately 600/650 people could have been in there and they got the this ideas that the dress dances as such were dead and they decided to split the Aberdeen Hall in two rooms, upper and lower and never thinking that the debs thing was going to arrive on. And then they were very restricted in the numbers they could take, like they were down to a couple of hundred and then again lost out on business there.

385.MM: When did the debs kick in?

386.AW: That kicked in, it must have been, let me see my own daughter.

387.MM: Was it the '70s?

End of tape and end of interview